THE FOURTH DAY.

Friday, the 25th February, 1927.

The Assembly met again at 11-30 A. M. on the 25th February, 1927.

48. Development of Agriculture.

MR. HARIHARA AIYAR ANANTASUBRAHMANYA AIYAR (*Member, Tovala taluk*) said that, although agriculture was the mainstay of the people of Travancore, it was the least developed industry of the State, in spite of the efforts reported to have been made by the Government. The area under paddy cultivation was steadily increasing ; yet, the value of the imported paddy was also annually increasing. From Rs. 2,28,86,714 in 1098 it had risen to Rs. 2,36,18,93 in 1101 which worked out to nearly Rs. 6 per head of population according to the last Census. The only means of increasing the output on the existing area under paddy cultivation was to increase the productivity of the soil. The labours of the Agricultural Department in that direction had proved vain. No practical results had been achieved ; and the statement, "The Government trust that the department will be able to make its influence increasingly felt by the agricultural population of the State. A mere record of laboratory achievements will not suffice", made by the Government in their proceedings reviewing the Annual Report of the Agricultural Department for 1101 bore testimony to the fact. The expenditure on the department aggregated Rs. 2,00,000 while the receipts were only Rs. 37,000 a year. The department could justify its existence only if the import of paddy and rice gradually fell and eventually vanished. If the department could not achieve it, it had better be abolished. It was no consolation to be told by the department that the loss to the State on account of the import of rice was counter-balanced by the export of the products from the cocoanut palm to the value of Rs. 3½ crores, especially when it was realised that no new cocoanut palm industry had been introduced in the State and that cocoanut cultivation had flourished even without any special impetus from the department. No country could stand the drain attending the import of an enormous quantity of food-stuffs without an equal or greater quantity of export to counter-balance the same. It was this principle of supply and demand that was sustaining the Travancore State and not any of the labours of the Agricultural Department.

Referring to the Cattle-breeding Farm at Easantimangalam, the member said that one of the main objects of the farm was to improve local breeds by crossing them with the imported variety. But according to the Annual Report for 1101, the experiments on cattle-breeding by crossing indigenous cows with imported bulls had ended in failure and attention was being concentrated on the breeding of Scindi cows on pure lines. If experiments in the latter direction also proved a failure, the money spent on that account would be a waste. The members's view therefore was that cattle-breeding experiments should be stopped. He, however, wanted that the local breed of cattle should be improved in view to avoid their further deterioration and ultimate destruction.

The member next quoted figures to show that the working of the paddy farm at Nagercoil ended in loss to the Government. Taking the average yield from the farm for a period of ten years, it was only 7½ *kottas* per acre in the case of the *samba* crops and 12½ *kottas* in the case of *valsiramundan*. It was much below the minimum yield per acre in Nanjinad. The demonstrations were therefore of no effect though the Government had been incurring a net loss of nearly ten thousand rupees for a decade, excluding the cost of establishment and interest on capital outlay.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

The most important work that should be done by the Agricultural Department was the prevention of insect pest in Nanjinad and the cocoanut palm disease in North Travancore. The pest usually occurred in the month of Tulam and substantially reduced the crop every year. The remedy suggested by the Entomologist was to pick out the affected plants from the seedlings and destroy them ; but the means of distinguishing the affected ones from the healthy ones had not been given. The member's view was that, if the remedy was carried out, it would leave the ryots without any seedlings for cultivating the Kumbham crops. It would be easier to leave the lands fallow for 2 or 3 years.

As regards the several experts in the department, the member said that his suggestion in respect of them made at a previous session had not been acted upon.

Such of the experimental farms as were not producing any practical results should be abolished. There was no necessity for an experimental fruit farm at Cape Comorin as it was known to all that *Soorangudy* mangoes were famous.

The manure depôt at Nagercoil should be abolished and the sale of manures entrusted to private agencies, preferably co-operative societies. Chemical manures should be manufactured in a central place utilising the services of the experts and sold to the ryots on credit and their value recovered after the harvest, along with the land tax.

The Agricultural Inspectors and their assistants should be asked to do itinerant work and perform demonstrations in the various parts of Nanjinad. They should also organise lectures on agriculture so as to remove the many false notions entertained by the ryots about the improved methods of cultivation. Leaflets on agricultural subjects should also be more freely circulated.

Lastly, the Agricultural Department should undertake the education of the sons of ryots in practical agriculture. Each village should have a small agricultural school where practical methods in intensive cultivation, ploughing, management and breeding of cattle, and the nature and use of chemical manures could be taught. The medium of instruction should be the vernacular, *i. e.*, Tamil in Nanjinad. A small number of cattle, ploughs and other agricultural implements, and a small demonstration farm should be provided for each school. Religious, moral and physical lessons should also be given and the pupils should be encouraged to do manual work. Special attention should be paid to the development of the character of the pupils and all teaching should be done under the direction of a single teacher as in ancient *gurukulas*. Agricultural books and implements should be supplied free of cost to the sons of poor ryots and agricultural education should be made free and compulsory.

The Nanjinad ryots were generally poor. One of the causes for their poverty was the heavy land tax they had to pay. They were needy except during the harvest seasons. This state of affairs should be remedied by adopting speedy measures for the reduction of land tax.

DEWAN'S REPLY : Mr. Harihara Aiyar Anantasubrahmanya Aiyar,—

MEMBER: I have to submit that the time-limit of fifteen minutes is not an absolute rule.

DEWAN : It is an absolute rule.

MEMBER : The President has a discretionary power to extend it.

DEWAN : The rule distinctly says that only fifteen minutes shall be allowed and that afterwards the member shall resume his seat.

MEMBER : We are not like schoolboys who have come for an examination. We have come here to make our representations.

DEWAN : Are you prepared to accept that rule or not ?

MEMBER : I have to agree in the matter.

DEWAN : You have to accept the decision of the President. The rule allows only fifteen minutes and that time is over.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

MEMBER : The President has a discretion to extend the time.

DEWAN : Are you prepared to accept that proposition or not ?

MEMBER : Yes, I must accept it for the present, and I must take some other means to alter the rule.

DEWAN : I call you to order. Mr. Harihara Aiyar Anantasubrahmanya Aiyar, before I proceed to deal with your representation, I should like to have information on two points. I understand you live six miles away from the Paddy Farm. May I ask you how often you have visited it ?

MEMBER : I have visited it.

DEWAN : Another point is—you spoke about the Cattle Farm. Have you started an experimental farm yourself ?

MEMBER : It was not a cattle farm that I started, but it was a dairy farm.

DEWAN : Is it still in existence ?

MEMBER : No.

DEWAN : Was it a success ?

MEMBER : No.

DEWAN : As regards the rest of your representation, or rather what purports to be a representation—it is a diatribe and not a representation—I neither subscribe to your wholesale condemnation of the department nor am I prepared to indulge in an orgy of abolitions in the department such as you propose.

49. Agricultural Department.

MR. NAINAN EIPE (*Member, Kottayam taluk, Group I*) said that paddy, the staple article of food in the State, was being imported in large quantities every year in spite of the efforts of the Government to increase its production in the State itself. It was with that object that the Kodayar Irrigation works were constructed at a cost of nearly one crore of rupees ; but nothing had been done to improve the condition of the *punja* ryots in Kuttanad. There was no organisation to represent the cause of the *punja* ryots. There were several works, such as the putting up of bunds, which had to be done by the ryots jointly ; and as a result of failure to carry them out promptly and at the proper time, some fields had to lie fallow. That was a source of hardship to the ryots. The Irrigation Regulation was not sufficient to enforce the carrying out of the works at the proper time. In view to remedy the above defects, agricultural boards should be constituted in Kuttanad as in Nanjinad. Although a meeting of the *punja* ryots was held at Alleppey in furtherance of that object, nothing further had been done.

The leasing of the right of collection of lime-shells was another source of hardship and loss to the ryots. The Government got only a nominal revenue from this source and public opinion was unanimously against the continuance of the lease. The Economic Development Board and the Legislative Council had also passed resolutions to the effect that the lease should be terminated. Lime-shells were necessary for the ryots for manuring their paddy fields and cocoanut gardens. In the circumstances, the practice of leasing the right of collecting lime-shells should be immediately stopped and all ryots allowed to collect lime-shells free of any payment.

The condition of the ryots in Travancore was very deplorable. They were becoming gradually involved in debt. The prosperity of the State depended upon the development of agriculture. But the Agricultural Department was not doing any substantial work conducive to the development of agriculture.. Although there were several co-operative societies in the State, they were not of much real benefit to the agriculturists. They should afford facilities to the ryots for obtaining long-term loans at low rates of interest.

In conclusion, he advocated the appointment of an Agricultural Commission on the lines of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in British India to investigate into, and give constructive suggestions for the improvement of, the economic condition of agriculturists in the State.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly